

Mekong ICT Camp 2010

Information, Communication, and Technology Training Workshops for Independent Media, Community Health Workers, and Civil Society Organizations in Mekong Sub-region

prepared by Thai Fund Foundation and Opendream (2010.03.10)

Rationale

It is widely recognized that participation in all levels of community development process and joint consultation with the community is an approach that will lead to more sustainable community development. Communication and knowledge management are essential contributing factors to the emergence of such participation and consultation.

The advanced capacity of information and communication technologies has resulted in a variety of information being more rapidly disseminated to increased recipients. Such higher-level of information technology as Web 2.0 has brought about the so-called “Read/Write Web” phenomenon that the web users can do more than retrieving information; they can also send their own data. An improved two-way communication makes it more convenient for people to express their opinions and collaborate through networks. Owing to diverse communication tools, such as weblog, podcast, and video online, citizen journalism is increasingly practiced. Such occurrence results in more perspectives on information and news, especially from those directly concerned, such as affected people, local media, or social development organizations. It is thus important that community knowledge management and citizen journalism are promoted so that those directly involved can share their knowledge, problems and proposals among themselves within the communities as well as forwarding them to the media for wider public dissemination and discussion.

Citizen journalism relies on four major factors to enable the use of ICT tools to effectively manage and disseminate news and information. First is the knowledge to use the software and tools to produce and disseminate the content. Second is the knowledge management, ranging from collecting, analyzing and presenting the knowledge to target groups. Third is the ability to provide wider access to communications networks at reasonable expenses. And fourth is the freedom to get access to and disseminate information and news, including access to resources that will promote the efficiency of information management and its public dissemination.

As a result of the aforementioned technology and factors, numerous alternative media are available, including alternative websites, radio, or community television. This is instrumental in widening the communication within and between communities, thus facilitating internal and external exchanges of community information and knowledge. These ICT channels will, in turn, either benefit community’s own development or provide useful information and knowledge that other communities can put to good use.

However, digital divides still exist to limit access to the communications system and information tools, such as computers and the Internet, skills in using technology, language barriers, and restrictions on freedom of expression. These are significant obstacles to the operation of the media and non-governmental organizations working in the Mekong sub-region. To solve such problems, it is necessary that networks of information and communication technology experts well-versed in media work and social development are established to give information technology-related assistance and support to their member organizations and communities.

The *Thai Fund Foundation* realizes how vital it is to develop the information and communication technology of the media and non-governmental organizations working in the Mekong sub-region. The Foundation also finds the use of “Free and Open Source Software” an appropriate alternative as it is free of copyright royalty payments, allows for modifications suitable for particular uses of each locality, and is fundamental to the information and communication work.

Yet, the information and communication technologies are rapidly developed while the number of media organizations, particularly those alternative ones, is also quickly rising, a lot of them originated from NGOs. Therefore, in late 2007, the Thai Fund Foundation decided to organize a workshop on the development of capacity for information and communication technologies of the media and non-governmental organizations working in the Mekong sub-region, during 25-29 February 2008 in Thailand’s eastern province of Chon Buri.

That workshop led to effective use of information and communication technology and the expansion of ICT knowledge networks in the Mekong sub-region countries, such as the Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Burma. Links with networks and organizations of specialists—especially those participated in the *AsiaSource* events—were established and many subsequent activities in each participating country also followed.

Because of the previously mentioned needs, the Project initiators see a necessity that a second workshop should be held to expand the specialist networks, provide training of new generation actors, produce regional trainers, and disseminate and exchange new technologies and techniques. Of particular attention will be those issues directly concerned with and of practical use to the region’s current situations. Realizing the growing importances and influences of the Internet and mobile technologies, in this second time, Thai Fund Foundation welcomes *Opdream* to be the co-organizer and curriculum designer. Opdream is a regional ICT consulting social enterprise with expertise in social media technologies and mobile applications, particularly in the areas of healthcare, knowledge management, digital library, and online activism. Adapted from the recommendations of regional networks of media and development workers, the workshop will focus on four topics, as follows:

- E-management: management of organizations and information;
- E-advocacy: electronic advocacy and social media strategies;
- E-infrastructure: informatics infrastructure for social development; and
- Open participation paradigm: Free Software, Creative Commons and read/write culture.

Objectives

1. To create common learning space whereby participants can exchange their ICT knowledge and skills;
2. To enable those working with the media and NGOs at grassroots level to enhance their practical skills in four areas: management of organizations and information, e-advocacy, basic structure of information for

- social development, and promotion of the concepts on the open source software;
3. To expand the network of open source software users to include regional media organizations and NGOs;
 4. To build networks of ICT trainers and educators that can disseminate the knowledge in the region;
 5. To press for a variety of learning activities at regional and national levels; and
 6. To create collaborative networks whereby ICT experts, media organizations, NGOs and social activists make use of ICT for social development.

Workshop Organization

Workshop Approach

The workshop lasts five days and focuses on the process that enables the exchange of experiences between technical experts and those working with media, community health, and civil society organizations so that they understand each other and can collaborate in putting ICT into effective use.

The process includes:

- Group discussion on various topics;
- Sharing of information on case studies of each organization;
- Presentation of technological tools and their applications;
- Study trips to organizations using ICT for social development work;
- Usage of ICT as a tool for knowledge exchange and post-workshop consultation.

Workshop Content

The content highlights on four major issues: e-management, e-advocacy, e-infrastructure, and open participation paradigm. Details of each issue are as follows:

1. E-Management: Management of Organizations and Information

- 1.1. Information literacy, documentation, research, collection, classification, and annotation;
- 1.2. Information policy, data security, communication security, data sensitivity and privacy;
- 1.3. E-publications, data preparation, types of media, sizes and types of appropriate files, Unicode standard for information exchanges, information forms accessible to handicapped people;
- 1.4. Information visualization/graphics for the presentation that is easy to read and understand;
- 1.5. Softwares for financial management, e-fundraising, material and human resources management;
- 1.6. Tools for communication, brainstorming, collaboration, the use of wikis, maps, etc.; and

1.7. Specific topics on community health, human rights, or disaster management.

2. E-Advocacy: Electronic Advocacy and Social Media Strategies

2.1. Association between mass media and electronic media, mainstream media operation, working with online social networks, communication planning for news breaking;

2.2. Campaigning, narrating, writing news or press releases that are consistent with the nature of electronic media and the behaviors of their recipients, combination of different media, and techniques of media presentation and language use (focusing on content);

2.3. Online public relations, buying online advert space, PageRank, search engine optimization (SEO), Google bombs, and PR work through online social networking service (focusing on techniques);

2.4. Social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, building community participatory space, including community participation in advocacy on the Internet and other electronic media, such as mobile phone and radio;

2.5. Working with digital sound, such as recording, editing, interference management, uploading to the Internet/podcast, other forms of dissemination, such as via low-frequency (focusing on techniques);

2.6. Working with digital images and moving images, such as digital photography, editing, choosing file formats appropriated to communication channel, uploading to the Internet, recording to other medium (focusing on techniques);

2.7. Problems of the use of e-advocacy, solutions, and discussion about imaginative work and other forms of advocacy.

3. E-Infrastructure: Informatics Infrastructure for Social Development

3.1. Installation of wired and wireless computer and network systems and basic maintenance and repair of the instruments;

3.2. Information maintenance and security, protection and removal of computer virus, malware, Trojan, data encoding, installation of Firewall, data backup, and data access policy;

3.3. Setting up of computer and network systems in remote areas or in case of disaster occurrence, such as the long-distance wireless Internet network, emergency communication system, small-scale electricity-generating system in support of the operation of the information tools;

3.4. Building of low-frequency radio stations for communication in remote areas, basic maintenance and repair, community radio, amateur radio, and packet radio;

3.5. Installation of communication system via mobile phone SMS and its basic application;

3.6. Creation of websites based on the content management system, installation of wiki systems, website maintenance, selection of web hosting, and website security; and

3.7. Translation of the open source software language into local ones so that the language barrier is removed to enable local users to use the software.

4. Open Participation Paradigm: Free Software, Creative Commons and Read/Write Culture

- 4.1. Principles and philosophy of the free and open source software, information commons, read/write culture, and peer-to-peer system;
- 4.2. Different types of open source software, such as operating systems, office applications, finance, calendars, graphics, audiovisuals, and the Internet applications;
- 4.3. Migrating from the currently used software to that of the free and open source;
- 4.4. Participation in the development of the open source software, reporting of errors, using and contributing to the improvement of the beta version of the software;
- 4.5. Dissemination and use of images, sounds, documents, media and cultural resources granted by the Creative Commons licenses; and
- 4.6. Sharing of knowledge, documents, media and various resources according to the peer-to-peer concept through such social networking as Wikipedia, BitTorrent, YouTube and SlideShare.

The workshop will organize classes on the first three topics: 1) e-management, 2) e-advocacy, and 3) e-infrastructure. As for the content of the fourth topic of open source software and read/write culture, it will be integrated into the three principal topics.

In addition to the above main topics to be provided, space will be given to the participants to exchange their own knowledge and skills in the various uses of office application software or image editing/manipulation program.

So far, this type of workshop has enhanced the capacity of those who were familiar with the use of ICT and new users. In general, they will be more aware and convinced that the knowledge gained will meet their needs. Particularly, those working with media organizations and NGOs will improve their skills in and understanding of technology use in their operation and problem-solving. The organizer intends to design the workshop activities to benefit those with fewer technical experiences as well as putting the idea that “everybody is an expert” into practice.

At the start of the workshop, the participants will be provided with a CD set of software in relation to the workshop for the use during and after the workshop.

BarCamp Mekong: A Co-Event

At the end of the workshop, the participants will form into groups and be assigned to develop demo projects to exercise their skills gained from the workshop. All the projects will be presented to the public on the last day at the BarCamp Mekong, which is open to interested persons. About 10-20 projects from Mekong ICT Camp participants and additional topics from general public will be presented.

It is expected that this public presentation will gain the general public’s reflections and opinions, which will be useful to further project development. Moreover, the presenters will have a chance to practice their skills in public communication, expand their networks to include non-participants, and put across their ideas and learn from each other in such an open environment as the BarCamp event.

The promotion of the Mekong ICT Camp and the BarCamp Mekong will be undertaken simultaneously, but in a co-event manner, whereby their schedules are successive and venues are adjacent.

MekongICT.org: An After Event Network

'MekongICT' website and online social networks has been set up to connected Mekong ICT Camp alumni together. Questions & answers, and resource materials will be shared over the forum. Case studies and movements from alumni and their network will also be updated on the web. This network is hope to be a hub for ICT for development in the region, and also a platform for discussing the organization of local ICT camps and the next regional camp, Mekong ICT Camp 2012.

Participants

About 60 persons, from independent media, community health practitioners, and civil society organizations in the Mekong sub-region countries (Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam) will be selected from applicants, taking into account their diverse type of development work and the balanced number of women and men.

The participants should have worked or involved in the field of media or technology. The technological skills of the participants will re-contribute to the design of curriculums. As English will be used in this workshop, all participants must be able to communicate in English. Translation of limited key documents will be provided.

Application Process

The application forms will be distributed to networks of advisory committee organizations, group mail, websites, and online communities.

Applicants are required to write their application letters, giving details about their personal data, work experiences and reasons why they want to attend the workshop, particularly those well-versed with ICT skills and intend to use their capacity to support other participants. The selection will be based on the applicants' experiences in using diverse technologies; capacity to give support to groups, solve problems, and exchange knowledge with others upon returning to their own countries; and interest in alternative technologies. These determining factors together with the combinations of expertise, interest, diversity of participating countries, and number of participating women and men will be weighed in a balanced manner.

The selection of participants will be carried out in two parts: those invited and granted with travel expenses and registration fees and those invited but are asked to pay for their own travel expenses and registration fees.

Cooperation will also be requested from funding agencies to give support to certain occupation networks or any particular countries. A list of those in need of special support will be made while women applicants must be supported in appropriate proportion.

All the application forms will be submitted to the selection panel to examine their required qualifications. There will be two rounds of selection: first for those with outstanding eligibility, and second for those to be on a waiting list in case the person(s) chosen in the first round cannot make it, or additional funding can be provided to support more participants.

Facilitators

Principal facilitators are chosen from Southeast Asian and international networks of ICT experts. Additional contributing facilitators will be selected from those applicants with the qualifications equal to the need for becoming speakers. Women and men speakers will be chosen in appropriate proportion.

Advisory Committee

A small group of accomplished persons from international organizations, ICT technical agencies, media promotion organizations, NGOs, and regional experts, will be invited to act as the advisory committee and give advice about the workshop's activities and content, as well as selecting the applicants.

Time

6 days, during mid-2010. – June 7–12, 2010.

Place

SCB Training Center, Chiang Mai, northern province of Thailand.

Expected Results

1. Civil society organizations, community health workers, and independent media in the Mekong sub-region improve their knowledge and skills in using ICT for their goals;
2. Establishment of networks of open technology users among the civil society organizations;
3. Establishment of the databases and networks of core leaders of ICT use for regional social development;
4. Creation of collaborative networks of ICT specialists, media organizations, NGOs, and social activists;
5. Promotion of learning and exchanges in ICT knowledge in various forms at local and regional levels; and
6. Introduction of the campaigning for access to information and participatory development.

Knowledge Gained

1. The time before, during and after the workshop sessions, the information and learning content via wiki systems or blogs will be documented and presented to the public under the Creative Commons license;
2. The workshop's conclusions on topics will be compiled into a mini research to be used over the next three years as an introduction to the ICT development and knowledge management, focusing on the media organizations and NGOs in the Mekong sub-region; and
3. The evaluation of the workshop will be undertaken through using questionnaires on the participants, together with observation and meeting of the advisory committee to conclude and assess the workshop activities.

Organizers

Thai Fund Foundation

Thai Fund Foundation (TFF) is a non-profit organization founded in 1997 by a network of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Thailand. TFF build long-termed sustainability of CSOs in Thailand through resource mobilization and capacity building. TFF also works directly with community-based to develop capacity and strengthen the combined voices of grassroots organizations to promote positive, tangible changes.

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Opendream

Opendream is a social enterprise with expertise in Internet applications and information design. A pack of digital natives from diverse backgrounds, with one single bold aim — deliver the information, change the world. With years of experiences in open collaborative projects and open source communities, it brings best-of-the-breed technologies and practices to their so called 'client-friends' making impacts in their landscape. Together with its networks of friends in NGOs, new media bands, hi-tech firms, research institutes, and software developer communities, Opendream providing not only the efficient solution but also the gateway to wider new opportunities of collaboration, extending and enhancing the reach of their client-friends.

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